

**Report of the Commission on Health and Wellness
151th Session of the Tennessee Annual Conference
October 16, 2018
Wayman Chapel, Columbia**

To the Right Reverend Jeffrey N. Leath, presiding Prelate of the 13th Episcopal District, Dr. Susan J. Leath, Supervisor of Missions, Rev. Alexander Gatson, Presiding Elder of the North Nashville District, Rev. Troy Merritt, Presiding Elder of the Nashville District, Rev. Sidney F. Bryant, Presiding Elder of the South Nashville District and Rev. Sharon Ogilvie Host Pastor and members of the 151th Session of the Tennessee Annual Conference.

The Health and Wellness Committee of the Tennessee Annual Conference submits the following statement:

The health of persons who live in the South and Southeastern United States lags behind the rest of the country. Tennessee ranks first in persons with diabetes, has one of the highest obesity rates, ranking 3rd in the country and 5th in the number of persons with hypertension. HIV still disproportionately affects our community, with more than 70% of new cases being diagnosed in African Americans. Tennessee also ranked #1 in the most prescriptions written per capita, but it does not appear that any healing has taken place as the numbers above have not changed. Most importantly, the disparities in treatment and outcomes have increased and often attributed to social issues, but the data suggest a strong bias in our medical system.

The taking down of the Affordable Health Care Act and the lack of Medicaid expansion further increase our risk for poor health and outcomes.

While the opiate crisis has not affected the African American community as harshly, we must be wise and willing to use the attention on treatment and mental health in this population to springboard a discussion in the African American community regarding addiction, treatment and mental health services. We should not be complacent in accepting that we should go to jail for the same issues for which mercy and understanding have been requested. We must use it as a way to achieve health and justice equity.

Members of the Commission have been parts of the following activities:

Participation in Health Fairs and local church get healthy and weight loss programs, participation in discussions of health reform, participation in national discussions on health reform, participation in the media in regards to health care issues, mailed Congress and Senators regarding issues of health care and health care reformed. Participated in directing TN Care reform, national participation in lectures and education and provided mission relief for those in need. Continued our work with Rev. Love and others on health equity issues. Participated on Boards aimed at serving our children and the uninsured. Submitted an op-ed to the Tennessean regarding the need to update healthcare processes

It is important that we continue to advocate for justice in the health care system. We also must become active participants in our own health. This includes educating ourselves regarding diet, exercise and understanding the health care system in order to be advocates for ourselves and our families. Our lives depend on it

Respectfully submitted,

Cornelia R. Graves MD on behalf of The Health Commission of the Tennessee Annual Conference